

March 10, 2022

The Honorable Quentin Williams, Co-Chair
The Honorable Rick Lopes, Co-Chair
The Honorable Joe Polletta, Ranking Member
The Honorable Paul Cicarella, Ranking Member
Housing Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: HB 5346: An Act Establishing a Pilot Program to Fund Social Workers in Emergency Shelters

Chairmen Williams and Lopes, Ranking Members Polletta and Cicarella and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Briana Hansen, I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT). I am a resident of Glastonbury and work in private practice. I am writing in support of HB 5346, An Act Establishing a Pilot Program to Fund Social Workers in Emergency Shelters, with requested modification to include Marriage and Family Therapists.

There are over 1,500 licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) through-out Connecticut. Marriage and Family Therapists are employed in various clinical settings throughout the state, serving diverse mental health needs via: private outpatient treatment; community based and outreach programs; in-home services; school-based services; and agency inpatient and outpatient care, among others.

Many seeking services and resources through an emergency shelter have mental health and/or substance use needs. Marriage and family therapists are specifically trained through a systemic lens, and have extensive training in treating individuals, coupled, families and systems as problems arise. Additionally, Marriage and Family Therapists further their professional expertises in various areas, including substance use and trauma. Given the significant systemic challenges and trauma, as well as the impact mental health and/or substance use for those seeking emergency shelter services; the inclusion of mental health providers, including Marriage and Family Therapists should be considered in providing supports in this pilot program.

In the state of Connecticut, there are 6 mental health professions: Marriage and Family Therapists, Professional Counselors, Social Workers, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, and Nurse Practitioners. The more residents that receive mental health care, the better it is for our state as a whole. Therefore, when establishing additional resources in emergency shelters, I recommend the committee be inclusive in all mental health professions that may be qualified to meet the needs of residents seeking these services.

I urge you to support HB 5346, with the inclusion of Marriage and Family Therapist as well as other mental health professionals in the pilot program funding.

Thank you for your time on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Briana Hansen, LMFT

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